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Friday, 5 October 2007, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Christian	(Ghana)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Verbeke
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Peru	Mr. Voto-Bernales
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad

Agenda

The situation in Myanmar

Letter dated 3 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2007/590)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

07-52995 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Myanmar

Letter dated 3 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2007/590)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Myanmar and Singapore, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Swe (Myanmar) and Mr. Menon (Singapore) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in response to a request contained in a letter dated 3 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, under the symbol S/2007/590.

I welcome the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: We meet at a time when events in Myanmar are attracting unprecedented world attention. My Special Adviser, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, just returned from a short mission yesterday and will brief the Council shortly. I asked Mr. Gambari to convey to the senior leadership in Myanmar very clear messages from me, on which Mr. Gambari will elaborate in his briefing.

I am deeply concerned about the recent events in Myanmar and the reports of continued human rights violations. I must reiterate that the use of force against peaceful demonstrators is abhorrent and unacceptable. While I am relieved to hear of reports that some military forces have been withdrawn and some restrictions eased, the overall situation remains of serious concern, especially with regard to the unknown predicament of the large number of individuals who were arrested without due process. I hope that those detained will be released without further delay.

Now more than ever before, the Government of Myanmar should take bold actions towards democratization and respect for human rights. The national reconciliation process must be accelerated and made as broad-based, inclusive and transparent as possible. A serious and comprehensive political dialogue between the Government and the political opposition is indispensable. One important outcome of my Special Adviser's mission is the announcement by the Government of a possible meeting between Senior General Than Shwe and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. I welcome that announcement and urge both parties to meet as soon as possible. It is too early to measure the impact of Mr. Gambari's visit or to label it a success or a failure. It appears, however, that a window of opportunity has opened, and it is vital that the Government of Myanmar respond positively.

Advancing the cause of democratization and the development of a peaceful and prosperous Myanmar will require the sustained engagement of the United Nations, with the active support of the international community, including especially the countries in the region. A united Security Council could play an important role in support of the ongoing efforts of the United Nations.

In that regard, I want to thank the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and its members for their support for my initiative, as well as for their own interest and engagement in this issue. I trust that they will remain seized of the situation in Myanmar and actively engaged in finding a solution.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Gambari: Thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the outcome of my recent mission to Myanmar from 29 September to 2 October. Members of the Council are fully aware of the circumstances in which the Secretary-General decided to dispatch me to Myanmar, and I am grateful for the clear and strong support expressed by the Council for my mission.

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I would like to thank the Myanmar Government for having received me and for the cooperation extended to my delegation during our visit. Within the context of the good offices mandate entrusted to the Secretary-General by the General Assembly, my mission had three main objectives: first, to assess the situation on the ground in the wake of recent demonstrations; secondly, to deliver clear messages from the Secretary-General to the Myanmar authorities at the highest level; and thirdly, to try to promote dialogue between the Government and the opposition as the best path to ending the present crisis and achieving national reconciliation.

Before addressing each of those objectives, however, I would like to express my gratitude to the Myanmar authorities for their flexibility in developing the programme of my visit as it evolved. As was the case during each of my previous visits to Myanmar, I was able to meet with both the Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council, Senior General Than Shwe, and with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. I also met with Acting Prime Minister Lieutenant General Thein Sein and other members of Government. Although, despite repeated requests, I was not able to meet with other relevant interlocutors — including the National League for Democracy (NLD) and representatives of the monks and 88 Generation Students — I did receive messages from many groups and individuals that have also informed my findings, including, of course, the close help I got from the United Nations country team.

The conditions in which my mission was undertaken and its duration were such that any assessment of the situation on the ground is necessarily limited. In my last two briefings, I updated members of the Council on the backdrop to the growing demonstrations since 19 August. The authorities initially exercised restraint in dealing with the protests — which was very much appreciated — but in the week preceding the mission tensions escalated through violent repression by the authorities against peaceful demonstrators. By the Government's own account, up to a dozen people — including a Japanese journalist — were killed, several dozens wounded, and over 2,000 arrested. Unconfirmed reports, however, put the number of casualties higher.

By the time my mission started, the protests on the streets of Yangon had been largely put down, and by the time the mission ended, the streets were busier and activity seemed to be returning to normal, although the situation remains tense. Of great concern to the United Nations and the international community are the continuing and disturbing reports of abuses being committed by security and non-uniformed elements, particularly at night during curfew, including raids on private homes, beatings, arbitrary arrests and disappearances. There are also continuing reports of mass relocation outside Yangon of monks arrested in the course of the demonstrations and monasteries that remain blockaded. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, who is with us at this meeting, and the Human Rights Council have issued strong appeals for independent verification of those reports and accountability for any human rights violations.

During the mission, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Yangon reported that at least two national United Nations staff members were arrested and detained. I brought that fact immediately to the attention of the authorities at the highest level, and the two staff members were subsequently released. A third national United Nations staff member and a dependent were also reported missing later, and both have also since been released. The United Nations Office in Yangon has received requests from people asking for a safe place to hide.

In my discussions with senior Governments officials, I was told that the demonstrations were instigated by a small minority of elements opposed to the Government and supported from outside; that the demonstrations were limited to Yangon and Mandalay, while the rest of the country had remained calm; that the authorities had indeed shown the utmost restraint in handling the situation; and that most of those arrested could be expected to be released shortly, after investigation and interrogation. My delegation was also taken to a mass rally in Lashio, in north-eastern Shan State, which was organized in support of the

Government's National Convention and seven-step political road map.

It is clear, however, that the demonstrations over the past few weeks have been, for the most part, an expression of deep and widespread discontent about socio-economic conditions in the country. General vulnerability in Myanmar is defined by accelerating impoverishment and the growing inability of the social service structures to address the basic needs of the general population. As an illustration, a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assessment of household living conditions for the period 2004-2005 noted that one third of Myanmar's people lived below the poverty line and that 90 per cent of the people were spending less than $300 per year. At the time of the study, UNDP predicted that a 10 per cent rise in prices could push another one third of the country below the poverty line. Since then, the price of fuel has been increased twice, and significant levels of inflation have driven prices up considerably for basic food items and commodities. The overall poverty level is also indicated by the share of the household budget taken by food consumption, which on average is as high as 69 per cent.

Although the protests coincided with the Government's sudden decision on 19 August to sharply increase the price of fuel, the marches by monks across the country appear to have provided a catalyst for the demonstrations to become explicitly political in nature. That must be understood within the context of Myanmar's complex history since independence. What is clear is that since 1988 the democratic aspirations of the people of Myanmar have been denied by the Government in the name of stability and security. Although the Government succeeded after 14 years in completing the National Convention on 3 September, and although it assured me that the seven-step road map is broadly supported by the population, the exclusion of key stakeholders, such as the NLD, and the failure to meet the expectations of key participants, such as ethnic ceasefire groups, tends to undermine the credibility and legitimacy of the process. In that context, the Government must open up and broaden the process that is to define Myanmar's future, and therefore meet the demands for greater inclusiveness, participation and transparency, in order to accelerate the transition to democracy and to civilian rule.

With regard to the second objective of my mission, I am pleased that, amidst the ongoing crisis, I was able to deliver clear and strong messages on behalf of the Secretary-General directly to the authorities at the highest level. My first message was to emphasize the changing domestic, regional and international context within which my mission was taking place, with the clear and strong support of Myanmar's neighbours, including China and Japan, countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Security Council. As I have said before, the world is not what it was 20 years ago, and no country can afford to act in isolation from the standards by which all members of the international community are held accountable. It is therefore essential for Myanmar's leadership to recognize that what happens inside Myanmar can have serious international repercussions.

My second message was to express the deep concern of the Secretary-General and the international community about the most recent events and to make specific recommendations for immediate steps to de-escalate tensions. Those recommendations include: putting an end to night raids and arrests during curfew; lifting the curfew as soon as possible; releasing all those arrested during the demonstrations; allowing access to clinics for those wounded during demonstrations; withdrawing military forces from the streets; ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law in the exercise of law enforcement, in accordance with international standards; allowing the International Committee of the Red Cross to have access to persons detained and to assist in tracing missing people; and putting an immediate end to raids on monasteries.

Thirdly, I emphasized the need to address without delay the political and socio-economic factors underlying the demonstrations through specific mid- and long-term measures, predicated on dialogue among all stakeholders. Any decrease in tensions can be sustained only if it is accompanied by positive steps to address the root causes of unrest. Specific recommendations have been put to the Government in that regard. The Council is already aware of the following key areas in which I have been encouraging the Government to make tangible progress: first, the release of all political prisoners, including those arrested in the course of recent demonstrations; secondly, the promotion of an all-inclusive national reconciliation process; thirdly, full cooperation with, and better access for, humanitarian organizations; fourthly, the cessation of hostilities in conflict areas,

including in Kayin State; and fifthly, continued cooperation with the International Labour Organization.

While it remains unclear how responsive the authorities will be to those messages, I believe that the mission helped develop understanding of the regional and international perceptions of the situation in Myanmar and of the urgent need for them to implement some of the specific ideas put to the authorities in order to meet domestic and international expectations. In terms of immediate steps, I would like to note that the authorities have already announced a relaxation of the curfew in Yangon and Mandalay. Reports indicate that the visible military presence in the streets has been reduced. I have also been informed by the Government that, as of today, a total of 2,095 persons arrested in the course of demonstrations have been released, including 728 monks, and that more releases will follow as a direct result of my request to the authorities on behalf of the Secretary-General. While those steps are welcome, further steps will need to be taken over the next few days and weeks, not only to overcome the current crisis but also to address the underlying factors of the recent unrest.

With regard to the third objective of my mission, namely, the promotion of dialogue, the visit allowed me to resume the role I started playing during my last visit, by conveying messages between the senior leadership and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The fact that I was allowed to meet with her a second time after meeting with the Senior General in itself suggests the usefulness of the United Nations good offices as a way for the parties to explore the possibility of engaging in early dialogue. I am therefore cautiously encouraged by the Government's announcement yesterday that Senior General Than Shwe is prepared to meet Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, although with certain conditions. This is a potentially welcome development that calls for maximum flexibility on all sides. The sooner such a meeting takes place, the better, as it is a first and necessary step to overcome the high level of mistrust between them. I sincerely hope that the potential for dialogue will be recognized to the same extent by both sides, and that it can translate into concrete steps in the immediate wake of the crisis.

Another necessary step for genuine national dialogue to take place is the release of all political detainees, particularly the sick and the elderly. After all, only free men and women can engage in dialogue. The future of Myanmar belongs to all the people of Myanmar. It is therefore in the interest of the nation that all those who have a contribution to make should have the opportunity to do so. The issues for dialogue are known — from serious political and human rights concerns to pressing humanitarian and socio-economic issues — but only by working together as one people will Myanmar be able to address them and move forward as one nation.

In that connection, the specific recommendations that were put to the Government, including the possibility of establishing a broad-based constitutional review commission, are aimed at encouraging the Government to engage in a post-National Convention process of consultations that is all-inclusive, participatory and transparent. That would enable the credibility and legitimacy of the draft constitution to be submitted to a referendum. The United Nations has experience in facilitating such a constitutional review process.

In addition to the imperatives of the political dispensation, the Government needs to be more sensitive to the extremely fragile humanitarian and socio-economic context within which the recent demonstrations and crisis broke out. In that regard, the recommendation put to the Government to consider establishing a broad-based poverty alleviation commission to identify and address socio-economic needs will be a useful vehicle for promoting national dialogue on ways to improve the overall "health" of the country. The work of United Nations agencies in the country has been recognized as useful by the authorities. Every effort needs to be made to continue to find areas of mutual interest where progress can be made, including in the areas of health, education and drug reduction.

While the humanitarian and political action needs to continue to be coordinated, it is essential not to let humanitarian actions become hostage to political conditions, and vice versa. Any serious steps on the political front should be acknowledged by the international community through the provision of incentives in the humanitarian and socio-economic areas.

In conclusion, I would like to say the following. Amidst the tragic events of the past few weeks, this is an hour of historic opportunity for Myanmar. As I have said before, responsibility for the future of the country

ultimately rests with the Government and people of Myanmar. However, the world is watching closely how that responsibility will be exercised in the interest of all the people of Myanmar.

To delay the prospect of a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Myanmar is to deny it to those who deserve it the most: the people of Myanmar. They have suffered too much for too long. At this point, what they need above all is hope, and I would be encouraged if this mission helped Myanmar's leaders to listen to their own people.

The Government also needs to know that the world needs a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Myanmar that can contribute to the development of the region and play a useful role in the international community. I want to reiterate here that, over the past two years, Myanmar has demonstrated greater openness and cooperation with the United Nations and the international community. Now is the time for Myanmar's leadership to make the bold choices that will demonstrate that these efforts have not been in vain and that Myanmar is ready to partner with the international community by making serious, tangible progress in the areas of concern to the international community. If it does so, it will find that there is much goodwill out there to help it along the way. Myanmar is part of a dynamic and prosperous region. As the ASEAN countries have already demonstrated, they recognize that they also have a responsibility to support Myanmar's efforts towards a peaceful and stable future.

Finally, as I have emphasized from the beginning, the Secretary-General's good offices are a process, not an event. It is important to recognize that one mission by itself cannot resolve the fundamental challenges facing Myanmar today. Advancing the causes of all-inclusive national reconciliation, democratization and full respect for human rights will require sustained engagement by the United Nations, including through the intensification of the Secretary-General's good offices, with the active support of Myanmar's neighbours, ASEAN countries and the international community, including a united Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Gambari for his briefing.

The floor is open for those Council members who wish to make statements.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): May I begin by thanking the Secretary-General and, in particular, his Special Envoy, Mr. Gambari, for their very full and informative reports that we have just heard.

The world has been both inspired and appalled by images from Burma in recent weeks. We have been inspired by the sight of people risking their very lives to make their voices heard for peaceful change and for democracy. And we have been appalled by the callous brutality of a regime willing to beat and kill peaceful demonstrators, including Buddhist monks, who are so revered in Burmese society — a regime that has carried out, and is continuing to carry out, mass arbitrary detentions across the country.

I was very concerned by the Special Envoy's comments about the continued human rights abuses being committed by the regime. It is essential that these come to an end.

Despite the censorship imposed by the regime, the entire world has witnessed these events on the ground in Burma. A sense of outrage and disgust at what has happened has spread around the world. The United Kingdom condemns once again today in the strongest terms the violence that continues to be perpetrated against the people of Burma.

The regime cannot turn the clock back. The world has seen the real desire of the Burmese people for change, and they have the support of my Government, and of many other Governments. The situation in Burma is not just an affront to the world; it is a threat to stability beyond Burma's borders. It is right that the United Nations and the Security Council should be involved. Despite the violence of recent weeks, the international community stands ready to help Burma achieve national reconciliation.

What needs to be done to bring about the change that is so clearly needed? First of all, we should set out common demands of the regime. These include the immediate end to the use of force against peaceful demonstrations, the immediate release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other detainees and political prisoners, and the start of a new and genuinely inclusive process of national reconciliation to allow Burma to transition to democracy.

We have heard recent statements from the regime, including one last night from General Than Shwe. The test for them is whether they are now prepared to work

with opposition leaders and with ethnic groups. They will be judged by results.

We believe that the Security Council should remain actively engaged. A presidential statement capturing the common concerns of the Council would be appropriate. Among other things, the Council should unanimously support the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy in continuing their efforts to set in train this inclusive dialogue leading to real democratic change in Burma. We thank them for their efforts so far. We believe that Mr. Gambari should return to Burma very soon to maintain the momentum. And we welcome the personal engagement and commitment of the Secretary-General.

Now is the time for all those with influence on the regime in Burma to play their part as well. We welcome the unequivocal message sent by members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), who see themselves directly affected by the crisis in their region. We recognize and appreciate the helpful role played by China in supporting Mr. Gambari's visit. The authorities in Burma need to know that they have no support whatsoever in pursuing their present policies.

Burma is a country of vast natural resources and immense human talent. But for some 45 years, those resources have been squandered and those talents have been suppressed by a callous and misguided regime. The world stands ready to help rebuild Burma and see it integrated into the global community, where it belongs. The sooner that an inclusive reconciliation process takes place, the sooner this can be achieved.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement and for promptly dispatching his Special Envoy to Myanmar in response to the unfolding crisis. We particularly commend the efforts of Mr. Ibrahim Gambari to engage the leadership of Myanmar in addressing the complex challenges faced by the country. Naturally, we deeply appreciate his comprehensive briefing and look forward to further detailed deliberations on the points he has raised.

In anticipation of such discussion, allow me at this juncture to share some thoughts, as felt by my delegation. The decision by the Government of Myanmar to permit Mr. Gambari's visit is encouraging. Such a spirit must be constantly promoted. We urge the Government to recognize the visit of Special Envoy Gambari for what it was: a window of opportunity to engage the international community in the resolution of the various problems that have been left to fester for too long.

The situation in Myanmar was the focus of Foreign Ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at an informal meeting in New York last week. On that occasion, Indonesia joined the rest of ASEAN in expressing concern, indeed revulsion, over the developments in Myanmar. We called upon Myanmar to desist from the use of force and to seek a political resolution. We urged the authorities to resume national reconciliation with all parties, working towards a peaceful transition to democracy, and to release all political detainees, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

The situation in Myanmar is at stark variance with the common path on which countries within ASEAN are currently embarking, namely, the vision of an ASEAN community, bound together by shared values that include democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We are currently working on an ASEAN charter as the legal instrument of the organization, on the basis of those shared values.

In the exercise of constructing this democratic vision, Myanmar has not been an outside partner. On the contrary, it has been working together with the rest of the ASEAN members. That is what makes the recent developments in the country all the more difficult for the other ASEAN members. That is why we encourage the authorities in Myanmar not to see these values, or the clamour of their people for them, as an affront, or as a challenge to be combated.

The tragic events in the country have serious implications for the credibility and reputation of ASEAN. We cannot look the other way, because it is impossible to advance together if a member fails to honour the values espoused by the group. Since 2003, our engagement has involved encouraging Myanmar to make tangible progress in restoring democratic institutions and pursuing national reconciliation, in accordance with its own road map to democracy. We have committed ourselves to supporting Myanmar in moving forward on this path in a frank, candid and firm way. Unless seriously addressed, the recent crisis can only undermine any positive steps that may have been taken by Myanmar over recent years.

Moving forward, it is essential that the Security Council consistently support the Secretary-General's good offices, including through the promotion of a climate conducive to peacefully resolving the current situation.

Equally, it is important to acknowledge the importance of Human Rights Council resolution S-5/1, adopted by consensus on 2 October 2007, at the Council's fifth special session, on the human rights situation in Myanmar. We believe that the implementation of that resolution should complement and strengthen the good offices of the Secretary-General vis-à-vis Myanmar.

As to Myanmar itself, we again urge the Government to exercise restraint and urgently work to replace the climate of fear with the power of democratic persuasion and inclusive dialogue. Genuine inclusive dialogue should take advantage of the perspectives of all parties, united as one people and one nation. In this regard, we draw some modest hope from the latest reports of the offer by the leadership of Myanmar to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. We hope that this is a first step towards national reconciliation.

My delegation believes that the recent events in the country should serve as strong impetus for real progress in the democratization process. As the Government and the people of Myanmar tackle the challenges of attaining those noble goals, Indonesia remains ready to continue to support that country bilaterally and within ASEAN.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our full support for the good offices of the Secretary-General in comprehensively engaging Myanmar, in a manner complementary to the efforts by ASEAN and other countries of the region.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement. I would also like to thank Mr. Gambari, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Myanmar, for his briefing and to congratulate him on attaining the expected objectives through his visit to Myanmar.

China is an immediate neighbour of Myanmar. The two countries share a border of over 2,000 kilometres, and the two peoples have lived as neighbours and have shared weal and woe since ancient times. Therefore, we are no less concerned about the situation in Myanmar than any other country. We sincerely hope to see a Myanmar with political stability, economic prosperity, social harmony and democratic progress.

Since late September, the situation in Myanmar has witnessed some disturbances which seriously disrupted the normal life of the people of Myanmar. The Chinese Government and leadership have followed the situation very closely and, on many occasions, called on all parties concerned to exercise restraint, restore stability through peaceful means as soon as possible, promote national reconciliation and achieve democratic progress.

China has also called on the Government of Myanmar to commit itself to improving the lives of its people, maintaining ethnic harmony and properly addressing related social issues. China encourages the Government to implement the seven-step road map promptly and to continue to make greater efforts on the democratization process. We believe that Myanmar's stability serves the fundamental and long-term interests of its people as well as the common interest of the Asia-Pacific region and the world at large. On this very point, China shares the same position, perspective and expectations espoused by the rest of the international community.

China firmly supports the Secretary-General's good offices and has always believed that the United Nations could and should be able to play a constructive role in helping Myanmar. During his visit to Myanmar, Mr. Gambari had an in-depth exchange of views with Myanmar with the leaders of Myanmar on the current situation and also met people from various communities and circles. That is one good step. We are quite encouraged to see the results of this visit and view positively the efforts by Mr. Gambari and the Government of Myanmar.

Since the inception of the turbulence, China has made its due efforts to promote stability in Myanmar and has encouraged the Myanmar Government to continue its engagement with the international community. So far, Mr. Gambari's visit has achieved some initial results. He has listened to the views of different parties within the country and has also conveyed the concerns of the outside world. It should be noted that the purpose of the Secretary-General's good offices cannot be served through only one or two

missions. This will be a gradual process with incremental results. We encourage Mr. Gambari to continue his engagements with all parties in Myanmar, further build on mutual trust and facilitate candid dialogue.

We have learned that Myanmar has invited Mr. Gambari to visit the country again in mid-November this year. We sincerely hope that the Secretary-General's good offices will truly help Myanmar to achieve internal stability and national reconciliation and will provide constructive assistance to the country in addressing economic, social, humanitarian and human rights problems. Any actions by the Security Council should facilitate the good offices of the Secretary-General rather than interfering with them or even undermining the mutual trust already established.

We have noted that the situation in Myanmar is calming down thanks to the joint efforts of all parties in Myanmar and the international community. China hopes that the situation in Myanmar will continue to move in a positive direction. The current situation does not pose any threat to international or regional peace and security. The future of Myanmar lies in the hands of its people and its Government, and their problems will be addressed properly through consultations.

In our view, it is quite understandable for the outside world to express concern or expectations regarding the situation on the ground. However, pressure would not serve any purpose and would only lead to confrontation or even the loss of dialogue and cooperation between Myanmar and the international community, including the United Nations. Therefore, the Security Council should adopt a prudent and responsible approach in handling the issue of Myanmar. The international community can help the country achieve national reconciliation and democratic progress by offering constructive engagement and mediation. The key is to take the right approach.

Yet, if the situation in Myanmar takes a turn for the worse because of external intervention, it will be the people of the country who bear the brunt. That is the last thing that China, as well as other neighbours of Myanmar and other regional countries, wish to see.

We look forward to continued constructive engagement and cooperation between the international community and the Myanmar Government, which, we hope, will help the country move in a positive direction. China supports the positive role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on this question and will continue to work with the international community for a proper settlement of the Myanmar issue.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Mr. Gambari, for their very thorough briefings.

Unfortunately, what we have just heard about the situation in Burma and the attitude of the authorities of that country only confirms our fears. On 26 September, the Security Council met and urged the Burmese Government to show restraint. The Burmese authorities did not heed that urgent call. To the contrary, 10 days ago a leaden weight descended on Burma.

It is impossible to know the toll of these tragic days, because the junta is trying to conceal its bloody repression from the world. But one thing is for certain: the brutal repression led by the army and the police has already cost too many lives. France forcefully condemns this violence against peaceful demonstrators. This is why, along with its partners in the European Union, France has decided to strengthen the targeted sanctions against the Burmese leadership. The repression is less visible now, but it continues day after day. Thousands of people are being arrested outside any legal framework. The population is living in fear of raids that are being conducted mostly at night by the police. Among those who have literally disappeared are many monks. Corroborating evidence attests to temples devoid of any human presence within and around the capital.

France expresses its extreme concern about the fate of these many prisoners and disappeared persons. The Burmese leaders must know that they will be held responsible for the fate of these persons.

In that tragic context, France reiterates its urgent appeal to the authorities to immediately release persons who have been incarcerated for having peacefully exercised their right to freedom of expression and of assembly. We urgently request that the International Committee of the Red Cross be immediately authorized to gain access to Burmese prisons. Furthermore, we demand once again the unconditional release of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi and of all prisoners of conscience imprisoned before the recent events. Finally, we reaffirm the importance that we attach to

the swift arrival of Mr. Pinheiro, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burma.

At this tragic time, the Burmese people can be assured of the support of the international community. France wishes to welcome the very firm position taken by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in that regard. Over and above that, the unity and resolve of the international community were powerfully demonstrated by the Human Rights Council's unanimous adoption of a resolution in keeping with the gravity of the situation in Burma.

In that context, the Security Council, which acts on behalf of the international community, cannot just remain silent. Its duty is to express — to use the terms employed by the ASEAN presidency — universal revulsion at the attitude of the Burmese generals and to make them understand that they will not be able to stay in power through a reign of terror and arbitrary action.

But we will be shirking our responsibilities if we do no more than condemn. We must go further and send a message of hope to the Burmese people by helping the Secretary-General to set out prospects for the future: true national reconciliation and a transition towards democracy. It is in that spirit that we reaffirm our full support for the good-offices mission led by Mr. Gambari, to whom we once again express our gratitude for his resolute actions, which augur well for the future. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General has been able to establish relations of trust with all the Burmese parties. We hope that, on the basis of this initial outcome and the ideas that he has just described, he will soon be able to make concrete proposals with a view to launching, with United Nations support, a genuine process of dialogue that brings together the authorities and the representatives of the opposition and of minority groups. To that end, we believe that he must be able to return to Burma as soon as possible.

We have noted that the head of the junta is prepared to begin a direct dialogue with Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi. However, that very belated statement once again sets out conditions for a resumption of dialogue. We hope that it is not just another delaying tactic. Of course, we leave the decision up to Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi and her party as to whether or not to respond to this proposal.

On the other hand, if the Burmese authorities continue to refuse to consider any serious and sincere dialogue with the opposition or set unacceptable conditions for its resumption, and persist in their tactics of repression, terror and human rights violations, the Special Envoy must make that known and the Security Council must draw all the necessary conclusions.

Finally, my delegation wishes to emphasize the great importance that it attaches to the collective nature of our effort. We all share the same concern; we all hope for real progress towards dialogue and democracy; we all support Mr. Gambari's activities. The countries of the region, the countries of ASEAN and China play an essential role, and France pays tribute to them. It is important that the Council support and strengthen this collective approach and that we send clear messages to the Burmese authorities.

Mr. Verbeke (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to welcome the presence of the Secretary-General. That presence illustrates the gravity of the situation that we are discussing today and of which the Security Council is quite rightly seized. I should also like to thank Professor Gambari for his briefing on his mission to Burma at a most critical time. Today's meeting is an opportunity to stress the Council's full support for his good-offices efforts.

The size of the demonstrations in Burma has shown the degree to which the absence of dialogue has proved untenable over the long term. Indeed, the movement of monks and of the population, which we have witnessed since 19 August, has been unique in terms of its scale and its extent throughout the country. My delegation condemns the brutal repression of those non-violent demonstrations. Moreover, Belgium is particularly concerned at the many arrests that have occurred in recent weeks and strongly urges the Government of Myanmar to release persons who have done nothing more than exercise their fundamental right to freedom of expression and of assembly.

The Council is no doubt aware of the European Union's decision to extend the targeted sanctions regime, following the grave events witnessed by the international community. Belgium supports those sanctions and wishes to make it clear that repression of fundamental rights can in no way be tolerated. Moreover, we hope that progress in democratization and in respect for human rights will enable us to reverse the course of events.

In that context, the role of the countries in the region, particularly the neighbouring countries, is

essential. Belgium welcomes the 27 September statement made by the presidency of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), whose presence in the Council today we welcome.

My delegation will listen closely to the statement to be made by the representative of Burma. In view of recent developments, Belgium's expectations can be summarized as follows: first, immediately launch an inclusive political dialogue; secondly, open the way for real democratization, with total respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and, finally, immediately and unconditionally release those arrested during the recent repression as well as all political prisoners, primarily Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): We thank the Secretary-General for his statement. We also thank Professor Gambari, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing on his recent visit to Myanmar.

South Africa supported the decision by the Secretary-General to send Professor Gambari, his Special Envoy, to Myanmar, acting in the context of his good offices. We also welcomed the decision by the Government of Myanmar to receive the Special Envoy, and particularly to permit his visit to Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi. We applaud Professor Gambari for his tireless efforts since assuming his role as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and particularly his efforts aimed at addressing the current developments in Myanmar.

The South African Government has expressed its deep concern at the recent violence and excessive use of force in Myanmar that led to the loss of life. South Africa is of the view that the long-term solution to the current challenges facing Myanmar lies in a negotiated, inclusive and peaceful political solution through dialogue between the Government and all political actors. We call on the authorities in Myanmar to exercise restraint and to refrain from further acts that may exacerbate the current situation.

We welcome the expeditious and concerted manner in which the Human Rights Council acted in response to the situation. We urge the entire international community, in particular the Security Council, to rally behind the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy as they continue with their endeavours.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): I would like to thank Mr. Gambari for his briefing and observations on his recent visit to Burma. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and to express our strong support for his continued good offices and efforts towards promoting democracy and reconciliation in Burma. We encourage him to remain vigorously engaged in that process and the Government of Burma to use that assistance and window of opportunity, as the Secretary-General put it, to take bold action towards democratic change in the country.

Slovakia is concerned about the deterioration of the situation in Burma. We condemn the violent and repressive action of the military leaders in Myanmar against the peaceful civil demonstrations which began last month in response to the escalating tensions, human rights violations and the deteriorating humanitarian and social situation in that country. We are shocked and dismayed by the reports of death and serious injuries among the protesters and are deeply concerned about the fate of hundreds of activists and ordinary people who have been detained or are missing.

Slovakia calls on the authorities of Burma to immediately cease all hostilities and human rights abuses against its own citizens, to free the arrested demonstrators and all prisoners of conscience, including the democracy leader and Nobel Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, and to commence a broad-based and all-inclusive process of political transformation and national reconciliation while respecting the multi-ethnic and multireligious nature of its society.

Burma has an appalling human rights record that includes the use of child soldiers and forced labour, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. For decades the military regime has waged a war against ethnic groups in which its security forces have razed villages, raped women and killed civilians, causing hundreds of thousands of people from Burma to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. We fear that if the violence and gross human rights violations continue, the situation in Burma might turn into a major and dangerous intra-State conflict with dire and unpredictable consequences for the whole region.

In that regard we reaffirm our call to the Government of Burma to cooperate fully with the United Nations, to address the political and humanitarian situation in the country and to implement the recommendations of the Secretary-

General, as presented by Mr. Gambari, and the provisions of the road map of transition to democracy.

We strongly support the role and efforts of the regional partners in helping to find ways for Burma to respond to the situation and achieve a sustainable, peaceful, democratic and political solution to the crisis. While reiterating our full support for the role and good offices of the Secretary-General and his envoy Mr. Gambari, we believe that the Security Council must also take appropriate steps to tackle the situation by considering a strategy that might help to facilitate national reconciliation and a genuine transition to democracy in Burma.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): The United States welcomes the Secretary-General's participation in today's meeting. We want to thank him for dispatching his Special Adviser to Burma and for working very hard — as I know he did — to make sure that he was admitted to Burma. Those steps demonstrate, Sir, your commitment to helping the Burmese people during this critical time.

We appreciate Special Adviser Gambari's report on his most recent visit to Burma and commend his efforts. We support his mission and have confidence in his diplomacy.

Terrible things have happened in Burma over the past few weeks. The United States is appalled by the brutal repression that has been carried out by the Burmese regime against its own people. The beatings, mass detentions, torture and even murder of citizens — children, women, students, monks and nuns — and even murder simply for participation in peaceful demonstrations are unacceptable. And they should be unacceptable to Powers with influence over Burma, to regional States and, indeed, to all of us in this Chamber.

Despite the Burmese regime's attempt to block news of the recent disturbing events from reaching the rest of the world by shutting off access to the Internet, courageous Burmese citizens made sure we saw the truth of what was happening on the ground. The images were gripping — photographs of the death of a Japanese journalist shot down by Burmese security forces and images of the lifeless body, floating in a river, of a monk who had been executed.

In considering those events, I wish to quote the words of Nay Tin Myint, a Burmese exile who underwent dreadful forms of torture during 15 years in a Burmese prison, which he called "the closest thing to hell". In a recent opinion piece he reminded us that the world was not watching in 1988 when thousands were killed by the guns of the regime. It is watching now. The people of Burma must not be let down.

Because the brutal repression by the regime is now occurring far from cameras and public view, it is difficult to verify the facts on the ground. Only yesterday, the regime admitted that it had arrested over 2,000 demonstrators and claimed that it had released 692 persons. The regime even arrested several United Nations staff members during the sweep of houses and apartments in the area where major protests have occurred. Fortunately, they were released. But there are many who are still in jail, rounded up by the Burmese regime in raids in the middle of the night. Given past practice, we fear that they are being kept in unimaginably inhumane conditions and denied access to international humanitarian organizations.

The impact of the violent repression is clearly felt throughout the region, and the region itself is faced with an exodus of refugees from Burma, the spread of controllable infectious diseases and the trafficking of narcotics and people — all closely tied to the political crisis in that country.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers made the point, and we agree, that the events in Burma undermine the reputation and credibility of that important regional organization. We welcomed the statement on 27 September by the Chair of ASEAN, Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs, in which he expressed the revulsion of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers over the actions of the Burmese security forces and urged a peaceful transition to a democratic Government. Others are also speaking out, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs of India, the Prime Minister of Singapore, the European Union ambassadors — all those voices are indicative of an emerging regional, indeed international, consensus that the repression carried out by the Burmese regime against its own people is both indefensible and intolerable.

I also wish to recognize the role of China in using its special influence to persuade the regime to receive Special Adviser Gambari. We look forward to the continued support of China for the Secretary-General's

Special Adviser in order to gain tangible results from its good offices mission.

What next? We have heard today Special Adviser Gambari's assessment of his recent visit and an accounting of the "to do" list he provided to the regime. I must convey to you, however, our deep regret that the Burmese authorities did not fully cooperate with him during his visit. It is of particular concern that they limited his access to key people and places, including the leaders of the 88 Generation student group and monks and monasteries that participated in peaceful demonstrations. Moreover, the United States was greatly disturbed to see the regime resume the unlawful detention of citizens, just hours after his departure.

Nevertheless, Mr. Gambari's mission may have succeeded in cracking open the door. It is still too early to evaluate it, but we take note of the offer of General Than Shwe to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. At the same time, we deeply regret that that offer included unrealistic conditions. In our view, the regime must move beyond gestures and take concrete steps that respond to the concerns of the Burmese people and the international community.

What does the Burmese regime need to do? The United States calls on the Burmese regime to implement the following measures: First, it must immediately end the violent crackdown, including an end to the raids, lifting of the curfew and the removal of the military presence around monasteries and on the streets of Burmese cities. Secondly, it must immediately release citizens detained for the participation in the recent demonstrations. This will be a critical step in de-escalating the current situation. Thirdly, it must release all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. This overdue step is essential in order to begin a genuine and inclusive dialogue with all actors of Burmese society, so as to begin the transition to a civilian representative government. And fourthly, it must restore public communication links, such as telephone lines and Internet connections, within Burma and between Burma and the rest of the world.

What can the world do to incentivize the Burmese regime to take these necessary measures? This is an issue for the entire international community. The United States has done its part to back up its words with actions that will serve to ratchet up pressure on the regime. Last week, the Department of the Treasury blocked the assets of 14 senior regime officials, and the Department of State identified senior regime officials and their immediate family members — over 200 individuals — as subject to a ban on entry into the United States. We are now exploring follow-up measures targeting the regime and those who provide financial support to it.

The Security Council must not remain silent just because the people of Burma have been silenced by the violent repression carried out by the regime. We have an opportunity to be their voice, and we must.

At the moment, Special Adviser Gambari is the link between the international community and the regime. It is therefore vital to maintain the momentum begun by his recent visit in order to obtain concrete results from his good offices mission. We urge Mr. Gambari to return to the region as soon as possible to continue his intensive diplomatic efforts, and we call on all Governments with influence with the regime to support his return and his mission. We expect that upon his return he will receive full cooperation.

Burma's neighbours have a special role and responsibility. We also urge ASEAN and its member States to build on their efforts to increase pressure on the Burmese regime.

What if the Burmese Government does not take appropriate steps? If the Burmese regime does not respond constructively to the demands of the international community in a timely manner, the United States is prepared to introduce a draft resolution in the Security Council imposing sanctions. We must all be prepared to consider measures, such as arms embargos, to incentivize the regime to cooperate with Mr. Gambari.

In conclusion, it is time for the Council to do more than simply listen to a briefing. Like the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, the United States also believes that the Council must speak out in a presidential statement to support the Secretary-General's efforts to establish a genuine political dialogue between the regime and all parties, to condemn the deplorable repression of peaceful demonstrators and to call on the Burmese regime to release detainees and political prisoners, so that they can participate in a dialogue leading to national reconciliation.

The eyes of the world are focused on Burma. The people of that nation are going through a difficult time. Like people everywhere, they deserve to live in peace, prosperity and freedom. The United Nations should stand with them and assist in bringing about a political transition from dictatorship and repression to reconciliation and democracy.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express our thanks to the Secretary-General for his statement. Allow me also to thank Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, for his important briefing to the Security Council on his recent visit to Myanmar. My delegation strongly supports the efforts of the Secretary-General, and particularly through his Special Envoy, Mr. Gambari, and we hope that those efforts will meet with success.

My delegation condemns acts of repression that prevent the spread of freedom in all parts of the world. These have many manifestations and forms. We regret the most recent events in Myanmar and hope that the situation will return to normal. We call for stability, achieved through peaceful means, as soon as possible in the service of the national interests of Myanmar.

In our view, the issue of Myanmar must be addressed in a highly professional manner, without selectivity or discrimination. We must understand that what is needed here is to find solutions, without resorting to confrontation with Myanmar.

It must be recalled that some principal and subsidiary bodies of the United Nations continue to consider the situation in Myanmar. On 2 October 2007 the Human Rights Council adopted its resolution S-5/1, on the situation of human rights in Myanmar. We would therefore prefer that the Security Council's approach to this issue be based on close coordination with those bodies. My delegation would also like to stress that the ideal way for the Security Council to deal with this issue would be to support the good offices of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, as well as those of regional organizations and neighbouring countries, in finding a solution to the situation in Myanmar, and to avoid attempting to interfere in the situation in any way.

Finally, we call on the Government of Myanmar to investigate the recent violations and to bring the perpetrators to justice. We call on that Government to resolve internal issues before it is too late. We strongly call on the authorities in Myanmar to cooperate with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, to fully assist him and to show greater flexibility, with a view to achieving prosperity for the people of Myanmar.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): First of all, I express my strongest appreciation to the Secretary-General and to his Special Envoy, Mr. Gambari, for their strenuous efforts on behalf of all of us. I cannot appreciate enough the special efforts of the Special Adviser, Mr. Gambari, because the messages that he has delivered to the Myanmar authorities and the objectives of his mission as he has described them are messages and objectives that I think all of us around this table share. Most important of all, I would say that they are shared by the membership at large.

His briefing today confirms that, through his mission, he has been able to achieve the maximum possible under the current circumstances, in 48 hours and notwithstanding all the limitations imposed on him. It is a fact that, as the Secretary-General has said, a window of opportunity is now open and I make an appeal to the authorities of Myanmar not to close it.

I am looking forward to what my colleague from Myanmar will say to show that we are on the right track. We are convinced that the unanimous support lent by this Council and by the entire international community was instrumental in the access to political actors granted to Mr. Gambari during his mission. Once again, cohesion, unity of vision and common purpose have proven to be powerful driving forces. The United Nations has reaffirmed its unique role as the trusted and legitimate highest body of international governance. Today I am glad to see the Secretary-General here with us, further reinforcing this message, and I thank him.

I will carefully report, of course, to my Government on the content of Mr. Gambari's briefing, which has shadows and light. It was eagerly awaited by the entire international community and will certainly be studied in Rome with the greatest attention, in line with the central priorities that our Government, Parliament, civil society and public opinion attach to the call of the people of Myanmar for peace, democracy and freedom.

Unfortunately, since Mr. Gambari's departure from the country, we have continued to receive very disturbing reports of repression. The suspension of demonstrations has not been achieved through dialogue

and reconciliation, but rather through a ruthless crackdown and intimidation that we strongly deplore and condemn.

Three days ago, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed, before the Human Rights Council, her concern for the safety and well-being of the monks and for the thousands of people arrested in the course and aftermath of the peaceful demonstrations. We fully share her concerns and join her call on the Myanmar authorities to give a full account of their actions, including precise and verifiable information on the number of people killed and injured and on the whereabouts and condition of those who were arrested. Humanitarian organizations should be given full access to detainees. A democratic transition, to be achieved through an inclusive political dialogue, remains the only viable recipe for peace and development in Myanmar.

That is gradually being recognized by the entire international community, along with the need for an immediate release of all political prisoners and the recognition of the vital role to be played by the United Nations in this regard. The consensual resolution adopted three days ago by the Human Rights Council testifies that the peaceful voice of the demonstrators in Myanmar has been heard and is mobilizing the attention of the community of nations as a whole. As has already been said by others, this Council cannot remain silent.

We are convinced that the latest events make it increasingly difficult to argue against the competence of this body to address the situation in Myanmar. Our firm belief is nurtured by the strong statements we have heard in the past several days from the countries of the region and in particular from the ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the main subregional organization. We must continue to engage at the highest level with key players, notably in the region. Our special thanks goes to China for the constructive role that it has played and, I am sure, will play, and its influence. We are convinced that they hold a special responsibility to promote a peaceful and democratic solution to the current situation.

At the same time, the Security Council should continue to be informed on a regular basis about the developments on the ground and the progress in the implementation of the Secretary-General's good offices mandate. The message that must come from this body — not necessarily, of course, from this meeting, but certainly in the coming days — must be a strong message of strong support to the Secretary-General, so that we will strengthen the hand of Mr. Gambari, his Special Envoy, in future initiatives. That is to say, we must strengthen his hand in the implementation of the messages that he has delivered on behalf of all of us and in reaching the objectives of his mission. We must strengthen his hand. I think that is what is at stake, and I heard all those who took the floor before me highlighting that point.

We are convinced that the Council's role will be essential in achieving our common goals in the country and beyond, namely reconciliation, stability, freedom and democracy. I hereby reiterate the position expressed by the ministers of the European Union on the need for the Security Council to consider further steps. On its part, the European Union has already decided to toughen its sanctions against the regime in Myanmar, while providing increased humanitarian assistance to the country.

Mr. Arias (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to join Panama's voice to those of the other Member States that have thanked the Secretary-General for his participation, and Mr. Gambari for his effort in handling the sensitive situation in which Myanmar finds itself.

I would also like to recognize the manner in which today's debate is being held. I think the fact that we are having an open meeting, with the participation of Myanmar and of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), promotes transparency in the actions of the Security Council. I am sorry that we have not been able to find a suitable mechanism through which to hear the voice of the Human Rights Council or the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose participation on this topic is indispensable.

I must also express my regret at the fact that we have not yet heard the representatives of either Myanmar or ASEAN, before the members of the Council expressed their views. I think it would have been preferable to listen to them first, before speaking ourselves.

Everything indicates that there is clarity and understanding as to the facts in Myanmar and the goals to be attained: protecting human rights, the release of the prisoners, the need for a national understanding

free from external interference. All of those goals seem very clear. What is being discussed is how to achieve those goals. In Panama's view, those are objectives that we should try to attain through a unified effort by this Organization, and not through separate initiatives of its various entities and organs.

In this context, the delegation of Panama welcomes the statements that have been made by ASEAN and welcomes in particular the support for the resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council. We feel that any gesture by this Council should be undertaken in a manner consonant with those previous declarations.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Secretary-General. We are grateful to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, for his comprehensive briefing on the outcome of his important and useful visit to Myanmar. Russia has consistently supported the good offices mission of the Secretary-General, and we hope that the efforts of Mr. Gambari will lead to positive results and that they will help Myanmar's advancement along the path of democratic development and constructive cooperation with the United Nations and the international community.

We repeatedly voiced serious concern at the situation in Myanmar during the days of its recent dramatic flare-up, when, unfortunately, there were human casualties involved. We call upon the authorities of the country and on the opposition forces and those involved in protest actions to show restraint to prevent the destabilization of the situation and further manifestations of violence. We drew attention to the information that the Myanmar leadership has shown willingness to cooperate with the international community, including, once again, to receive Mr. Gambari again, and also to engage in contacts with Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders of the opposition. It is important that that approach be acted upon in practice.

The Russian delegation took an active part in the adoption of the resolution of the Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in Myanmar. The main point, we think, is to encourage that country to consistently implement the proclaimed programme of democratic reforms. We pin great hopes on members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other States of the region to continue further efforts to promote a normalization of the situation in Myanmar.

With regard to the Security Council, its job is to continue lending political support to the efforts of Mr. Gambari, who received an appropriate mandate from the General Assembly.

Mr. Voto-Bernales (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Ibrahim Gambari for his extensive and clear information about his recent visit to Myanmar. He has brought us credible testimony about the painful situation suffered by the people of Myanmar. Peru is concerned by the violation of human rights and the worrisome information about the humanitarian crisis that Myanmar is going through.

This situation has worsened over the past year, as the military authorities have intensified repression against the political opposition and ethnic minorities, which has led to the displacement of hundreds of people within and outside the country. We join in the general rejection by the international community of the repression witnessed over the past few days against peaceful demonstrators. Also, the restrictions on fundamental freedoms, unjustified detention, cases of torture and other forms of maltreatment — all of these are unacceptable. We reject the arbitrary detention of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi and of other political leaders, despite repeated appeals from the international community.

This week, the Human Rights Council in Geneva has acted in accordance with its main responsibility, namely to respond when there are victims. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Peru actively promoted the adoption of the resolution.

Further, the increase in the number of internally displaced persons and refugees is creating a serious situation of instability, which threatens security in the region. In that context, Peru would like to highlight the urgent need to promote cooperation and dialogue as a way of seeking political solutions designed to bring about a democratic transition and genuine national reconciliation. In this task, the participation and cooperation of the neighbouring countries surround Myanmar is very important, as well as that of the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and of the international community as a whole.

In conclusion, Peru would like to express support for the continued good offices mission undertaken by the Secretary-General through his Special Envoy, Mr. Gambari, leading to a dialogue between the Government and leaders of Myanmar.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ghana.

My delegation is also grateful to the Secretary-General for his statement. I also wish to reiterate Ghana's confidence in his good offices in Myanmar. We strongly support his positive interventions in the situation in that country, both directly and through the Special Envoy, Mr. Gambari. Let me also express our thanks for the briefing provided by Mr. Gambari on his latest mission to Myanmar, which elicited intense interest around the globe — and rightly so — because the situation in Myanmar is a matter of concern to us all.

Given the circumstances in which the visit was undertaken, we think that Mr. Gambari deserves commendation for engaging with both the authorities of Myanmar and their opponents, as well as with regional leaders, particularly of countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). That underscores the continuing importance of the role of the Special Envoy as a vital link, not only between the Government and the people of Myanmar, but also with the international community at large.

We believe that recent events in the country have introduced a new dynamic in the political situation and we are convinced that the long-term peace and stability of the country depends on the fulfilment of the legitimate aspirations of the people of Myanmar for democracy and for a better quality of life. The contribution of the Special Envoy in that regard is of utmost importance.

I shall now resume my functions as President of the Council. I shall now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Security Council in connection with Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari's visit to Myanmar under the Secretary-General's good offices role mandated by the General Assembly. I wish also to thank the Secretary-General for his statement. I am also gratified to learn that Mr. Gambari, after reporting to the Secretary-General, has briefed the President of the General Assembly earlier today.

Mention was made of a statement to be made today on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). I also understand that my colleague, the Permanent Representative of Singapore, will also be making a statement. Yesterday, when I contacted him, he was kind enough to clarify to me that his statement will not be on behalf of ASEAN.

At the meeting of the 10 permanent representatives from ASEAN countries just before the present meeting, the Permanent Representative of Singapore was kind enough to share his statement with us. Six permanent representatives, including Myanmar, made known their views to Singapore, the recurring chair of ASEAN, that they regard the statement in question as a national statement by Singapore. The statement is indeed forward-looking, but there are some elements with which we have some difficulty, particularly with regard to the reference to sanctions.

In the life of every nation, there are times when it has to face challenging situations and overcome them. Myanmar went through that experience very recently. In fact, what Myanmar went through was indeed a daunting challenge. However, we have been able to restore stability. The situation has now returned to normalcy. Currently, people all over the country are holding peaceful rallies within the bounds of the law to welcome the successful conclusion of the national convention, which has laid down the fundamental principles for a new constitution, and to demonstrate their aversion to recent provocative demonstrations.

Let me now turn to Special Envoy Gambari's visit to Myanmar. In that connection, I wish to deeply thank Mr. Gambari for his briefing.

We had already agreed for Mr. Gambari to visit Myanmar in November. However, after Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met with my Foreign Minister on 26 September and expressed his desire to dispatch Ambassador Gambari to Myanmar at an early date, the Government of the Union of Myanmar invited Ambassador Gambari to visit Myanmar commencing 29 September.

Ambassador Gambari was accorded access and full cooperation by the Myanmar Government during his visit. He was received by Senior General Than Shwe, the Chairman of the State Peace and

Development Council. He also had the opportunity to hold separate meetings with the Acting Prime Minister and Government spokespersons, led by the Minister for Information. In addition, he met twice with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Ambassador Gambari travelled to northern Shan State and was able to witness the prevalence of peace and stability even in those far-flung areas. He witnessed a rally in support of the successful conclusion of the National Convention by some 120,000 people in Lashio. He also had occasion to meet with the leaders of an armed group that had returned to the legal fold and that had participated in the National Convention.

Prior to the visit of Ambassador Gambari, maximalist positions were articulated by a number of countries that Ambassador Gambari must meet our Head of State and that Ambassador Gambari must also meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Ambassador Gambari has accomplished even more than what was expected from his visit. Following the visit, Ambassador Gambari passed through Singapore and called on Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in his capacity as Chair of the ASEAN Standing Committee. Subsequent to the meeting, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore issued a press release which mentioned that Prime Minister Lee "was encouraged by the access and cooperation given by Myanmar Government to Mr. Gambari".

In view of the improved situation of peace and stability in the entire country, and in particular in Yangon and Mandalay, the curfew hours imposed in those two cities have been shortened. The authorities initially detained a number of people for questioning. Those who had not infringed any serious laws were later released. To date — as mentioned by Ambassador Gambari — a total of 2,095 people, including 722 monks, have been released. Those who were released also include the remaining locally recruited employee of the United Nations Development Programme and her family. More releases will follow.

On the political front, Myanmar will continue with its policy of national reconciliation. We will resolutely implement our seven-step road map to fulfil the aspirations of the people. As part of the national reconciliation process, our Head of State has relayed a message through Ambassador Gambari to the effect that, should Daw Aung San Suu Kyi renounce her obstructive and confrontational stance, he would be ready to meet her personally. I am also happy to inform the Council that Ambassador Gambari has again been invited to visit Myanmar some time in November.

We are encouraged by the position that was expressed by the Secretary-General that no one can address the complex challenges facing Myanmar better than the Myanmar people themselves. I would like to recall, as Ambassador Gambari just mentioned, what Ambassador Gambari said to this body in an earlier briefing: the good offices role is a process and not an event. Patience, time and space are needed.

Cooperation with the United Nations is a basic tenet of Myanmar's foreign policy. It is in that context that we cooperate fully with the Secretary-General and Ambassador Gambari in connection with the good offices role mandated to the Secretary-General by the General Assembly. The process is proceeding well. More importantly, despite the recent tragic events, the situation in Myanmar is not — I repeat, not — a threat either to regional or to international peace and security. I would like to express my deep appreciation to the members of the Security Council that, both here and at their capitals, have taken that position. No Security Council action is warranted with regard to the situation in Myanmar.

I would therefore like to call on the Security Council to refrain from any action that would be detrimental to the good offices role of the Secretary-General mandated by the General Assembly. On our part, we will continue to cooperate with the United Nations. In that regard, I can do no better than to quote my Foreign Minister, who, in his address to the General Assembly, stated: "We will continue to work closely and cooperate actively with the United Nations" (*A/62/PV.13*).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Singapore.

Mr. Menon (Singapore): As a neighbour of Myanmar and a fellow member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), it is with a heavy heart that we speak today. Recent events in Myanmar cannot be overlooked or ignored, even by Myanmar's friends and neighbours.

That is why, on 27 September, we issued a statement in our capacity as ASEAN Chair. All ASEAN members were present, including nine of ten Foreign Ministers. The statement expressed revulsion over reports that the protests were being suppressed by

violence. It called for restraint, national reconciliation, the release of political detainees, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and for Myanmar to work towards a peaceful transition to democracy. In addition, the statement expressed support for the visit of United Nations Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari. It also referred to the serious impact on ASEAN's credibility. It therefore cannot be just an internal matter of Myanmar.

On 29 September, my Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, wrote to Senior General Than Shwe to convey his deep concern and to urge Myanmar to work with Mr. Gambari to find a way forward. On 2 October, my delegation in Geneva delivered a statement at the fifth special session of the Human Rights Council on the draft resolution on Myanmar and stressed the importance of supporting Mr. Gambari's mission. On 3 October, Prime Minister Lee met with Mr. Gambari to assure him of ASEAN's full support and to encourage him to press on with the United Nations efforts.

But we are here today to look forward, not back. To move forward, there are certain realities that we have to acknowledge. First, we need to recognize that the United Nations efforts, as embodied by Mr. Gambari, are unique and irreplaceable. At this stage, Mr. Gambari represents our best hope and is also the only game in town. Mr. Gambari is an experienced and gifted diplomat who seems to have gained the trust of both sides. The international community should buttress his position and invest him with the requisite support, authority and prestige. Mr. Gambari should return to Myanmar and resume his good offices role as soon as possible to sustain the momentum. We urge the Myanmar Government to continue to cooperate with the United Nations and Mr. Gambari.

Secondly, we should avoid falling into the trap of over-simplification. The situation in Myanmar is complicated. As the Secretary-General himself has noted, we should not prematurely try to pigeonhole Mr. Gambari's visit as a success or failure. He has succeeded in beginning a process that can bring change to Myanmar. The fact that Myanmar has allowed Mr. Gambari to visit three times, most recently in the midst of the present crisis, is encouraging. It shows that the Myanmar authorities want to maintain a line to the United Nations.

There are also reports that the authorities have released some of those detained. Unfortunately, many others are still being detained and arrests reportedly continue. Yesterday, Senior General Than Shwe announced that he was willing to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, but he imposed preconditions on that meeting and, most regrettably, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remains in detention. Mr. Gambari's visit is the start of a long and arduous process.

Thirdly, we have to be pragmatic. It would be a grievous mistake to think that if the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) left the scene tomorrow, all would suddenly be well and all problems would automatically be resolved. The military is a key institution in Myanmar that cannot be wished away. Any peaceful solution to the crisis will have to involve all parties, including the military. If the military is not part of the solution, there will be no solution. If the process is mishandled, it could result in greater instability and more suffering for the Myanmar people. Thant Myint-U, a former United Nations Secretariat official and grandson of U Thant, warned recently that the world must be careful that the change it wants to see in Myanmar does not lead to the anarchy seen in Iraq.

Myanmar is not a homogeneous State. There are many armed ethnic groups that are opposed to central Government rule. Only a very tenuous ceasefire prevents the renewal of hostilities. That should not be an excuse for delaying necessary steps forward, but neither do we want a Yugoslavia in South-East Asia.

There has also been talk about additional sanctions. My delegation can understand the impulse to punish unacceptable behaviour. Indeed, we should not rule that out. But we have to pause to consider dispassionately what the real impact of additional sanctions will be. How will they affect a regime that is only tangentially connected to the rest of the world? Will they help or hinder the role of the United Nations? How will they affect the willingness of the SPDC to cooperate with Mr. Gambari? What is their impact on the people of Myanmar? All such actions should have only one objective, which is to strengthen Mr. Gambari's hand as an effective mediator.

Fourthly, ASEAN will take a responsible position. Myanmar is part of the ASEAN family. Whatever we may think about the behaviour of a family member, it is still a family member. But

ASEAN's influence is limited. That was underscored last year when the Myanmar authorities refused to seriously engage the ASEAN envoy. Yet, the same authorities received Mr. Gambari and arranged a substantial programme for him, which included meetings with Senior General Than Shwe and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. That was a clear signal of Myanmar's preferences.

It is in everyone's interest to keep Myanmar in the ASEAN family, but we are not Myanmar's only neighbour. China and India are two large countries with a long history of engagement with Myanmar. We believe that they are uniquely placed to play a role. In that regard, allow me to commend China for its quiet efforts, which we believe were instrumental in securing a substantive and useful visit for Mr. Gambari. We hope that India will play a similar role. Likewise, Japan has a role to play, because it is a major aid donor to Myanmar. All of us — the international community as a whole — must do our part. Because of the size and complexity of the undertaking, the good offices of the United Nations and Mr. Gambari offer the only new way forward.

The President: There are no other speakers inscribed on my list.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the course of the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.